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THURSDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ General Assembly President S.R. Insanally welcomes South Africa back to membership as Assembly moves to readmit country and terminate mandate of Special Committee against Apartheid.

+ Secretary-General in report to Security Council, says work of UNOMSA and international organizations during South Africa's recent elections demonstrates the unique benefits of such cooperation.

+ Seminar on Palestinian Trade and Investment Needs concludes in Paris; participants considered such issues as Palestinian bilateral economic relations, role of international assistance, promotion of private enterprize and new legal framework.

+ WHO reports tuberculosis deaths increasing in Eastern Europe after 40 years of decline; increases linked to impact of recent political, economic and social changes on region's health systems.

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General Assembly President S. R. Insanally said today that the struggle against the iniquitous system of apartheid had finally been won and South Africa as a founding member, could resume its place at the United Nations. He was addressing the Assembly, as it moved to readmit a united, democratic and non-racial South Africa, and terminate the mandate of the Special Committee Against Apartheid. Under new leadership, South Africa stood ready to face the future, the President said. The Government of National Unity was confronting, with great determination, the major reconstruction and development programmes needed to satisfy its peoples' aspirations. The spirit of national harmony and reconciliation in the country augurs well for its rapid progress, he noted.

Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali said that as a regional economic power, South Africa could also make its contribution to the development of the African continent and contribute to regional stability. In the General Assembly, South Africa had a major role to play. The African continent as well as the entire international community expected a great deal of it.

(more)

For information media--not an official record

The South African Foreign Minister, Mr. Alfred Nzo, said his country's long night of diplomatic isolation had finally come to an end. South Africa was mindful of its new international responsibilities, and looked forward to working towards making the world a better, safer, and more prosperous place. The struggle against apartheid had been long, arduous and painful, he said. The support of the international community, and the United Nations in particular, had been a critical factor in the final victory.

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Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has said the joint efforts of the United Nations Observer Mission in South Africa (UNOMSA) and the international organizations during the country's recent elections demonstrated the unique and positive benefits of such cooperation. In a report to the Security Council dated 16 June, the Secretary-General said the United Nations, through UNOMSA, had gained a wealth of experience. The Mission's achievements, mistakes and shortcomings would provide invaluable lessons for the future. The high level of cooperation between UNOMSA, the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) and other South African institutions during the transitional process, helped solve a number of early problems faced by the IEC.

The Secretary-General noted the valuable contributions to the peace process made by the National Peace Accord and its various peace committees. He also noted the close cooperation between UNOMSA, and the observer missions from the Commonwealth, the European Union and the Organization of African Unity (OAU). Their level of like-mindedness and understanding was evident in the two key joint statements they made. First, to assess the manner in which the voting took place and second in the final assessment of the electoral process. However, he stressed there was room for improvement and said he would be inviting them and other regional organizations to work together on guidelines for future cooperation based on their common experiences in South Africa.

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The current peace process represented an opportunity to build a society based on mutual respect, self-interest, fairness and equity, the seminar on Palestinian Trade and Investment Needs was told, as it concluded in Paris yesterday. Leila Shaheed, Observer for Palestine to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) said Israelis and Palestinians now talked together in a way that was freer and more politically responsible.

In his closing statement, Chairman, Keba Birane Cisse (Senegal), said that Palestinian economic and social development was essential for a just and lasting peace. In recent months, agreements had been reached on building a Palestinian economy and integrating it regionally and internationally. Trade was important in that process, he stressed. The Seminar had represented a learning process, and offered fresh perspectives on the magnitude of the task facing the Palestinians.

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Seminar participants considered a wide range of issues in the building of a Palestinian economy, including the creation of a favourable economic environment, Palestinian bilateral economic relations and the role of international assistance. They also addressed the need to promote private enterprize, a new Palestinian legal framework and building Palestinian public institutions and a public finance system.

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Tuberculosis deaths are increasing in Eastern Europe after nearly 40 years of steady decline, according to a World Health Organization (WHO) report. The increases are linked to the impact of recent political, economic, and social changes on health systems. An estimated 29,000 people died from tuberculosis last year in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union and over 2 million people there are believed to have been infected with the TB bacilli during the past five years

The WHO report warned that most Eastern European countries needed to overhaul their TB control programmes, or the current epidemic would steadily worsen. Tuberculosis was increasing in the region without any help from the HIV epidemic or immigration, factors most often associated with the resurgence of TB in other industrialized nations. There have beem dramatic increases in large cities such as Moscow, where the annual incidence of the disease had nearly doubled over the past two years. The WHO has requested donor nations to invest in efforts to control Eastern Europe's TB epidemic. "Unless TB is controlled in Eastern Europe, it cannot be controlled in Western Europe", said Dr. Mario Raviglione, medical officer for the WHO tuberculosis programme.

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Correction: The Daily Highlights of Wednesday, 22 June, inadvertently published a story regarding compensation payments to Iraqi citizens. That story was based on a document, published earlier, which was reissued yesterday for technical reasons.